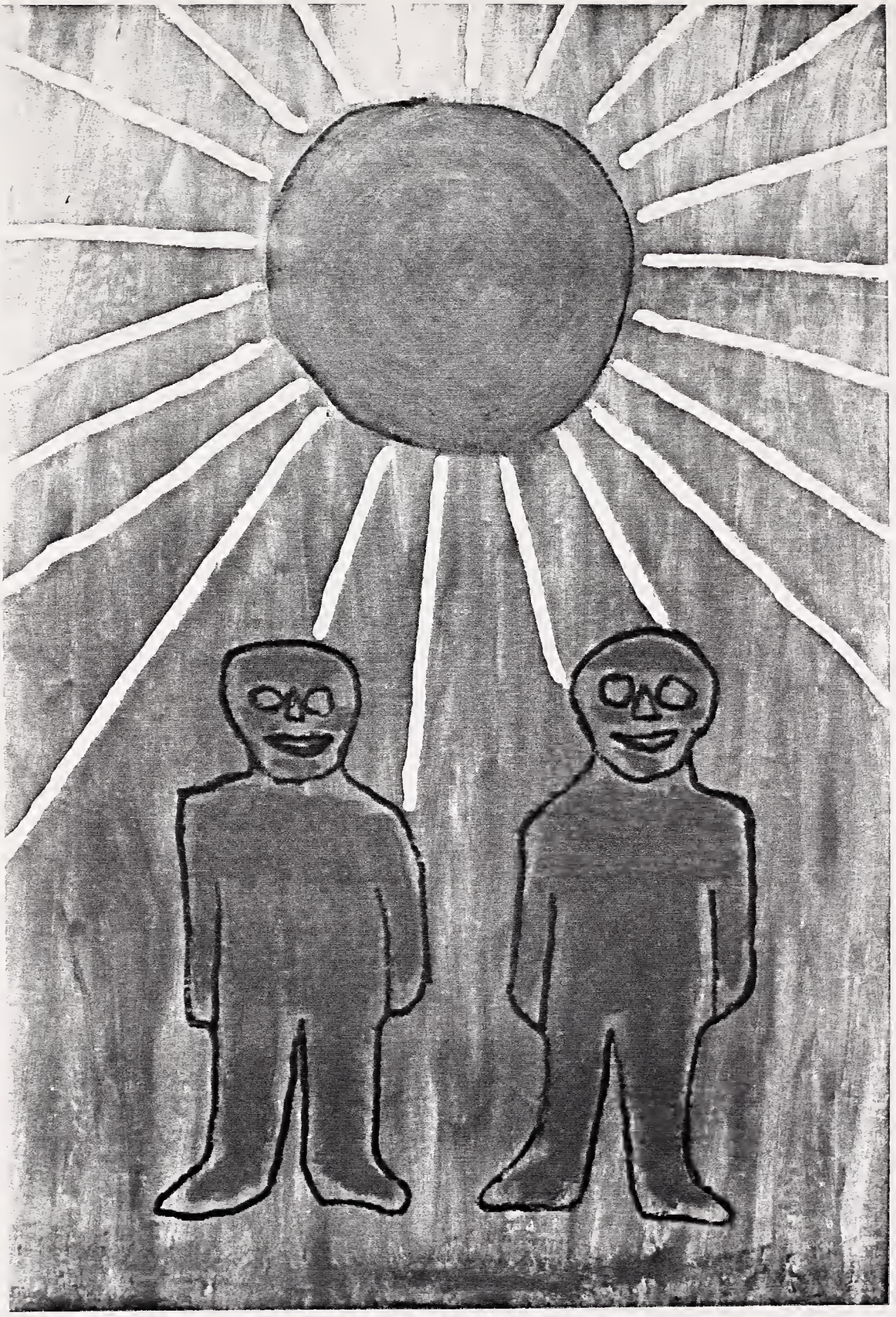
MEXICAN VISIONS

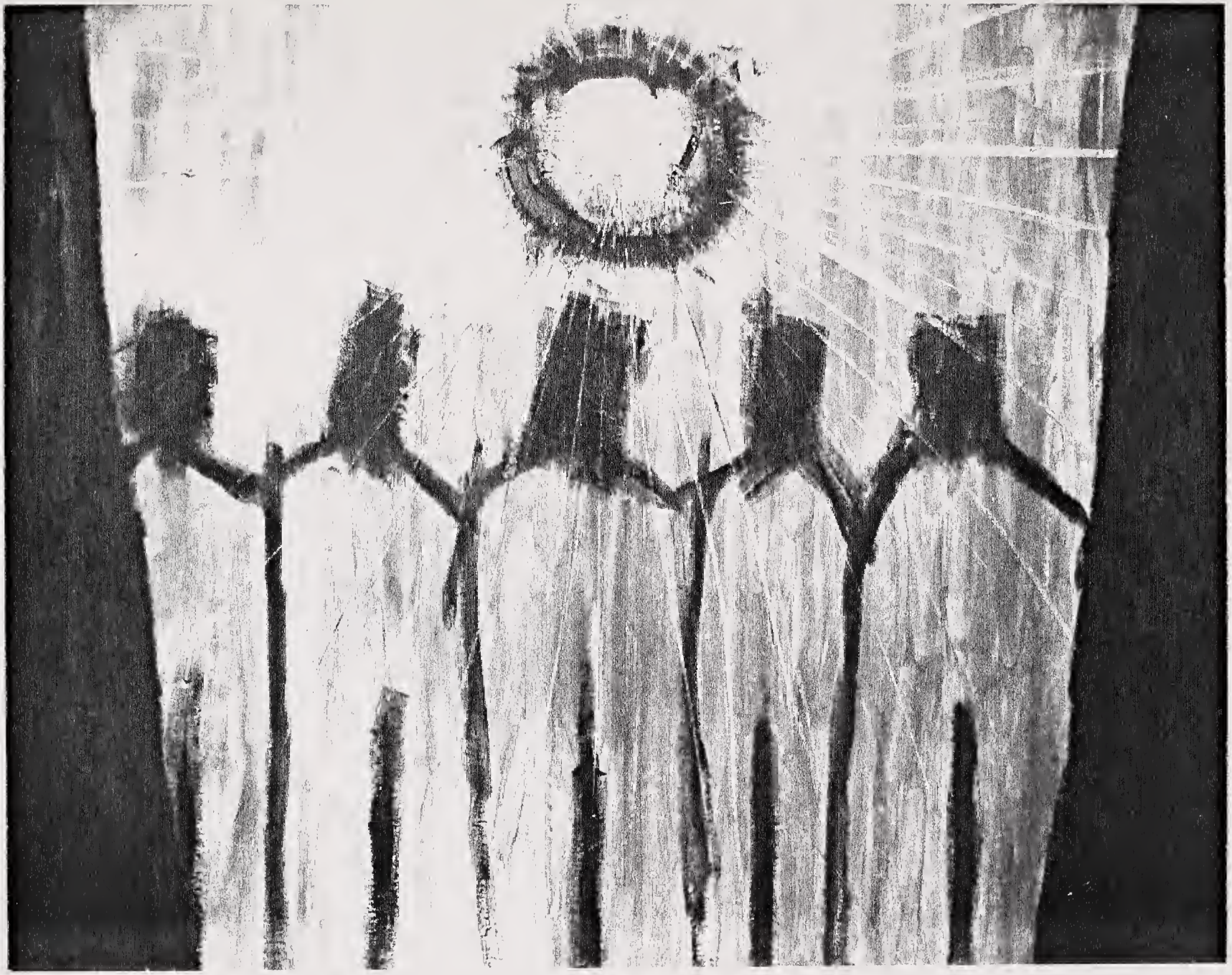
Russell Epprecht

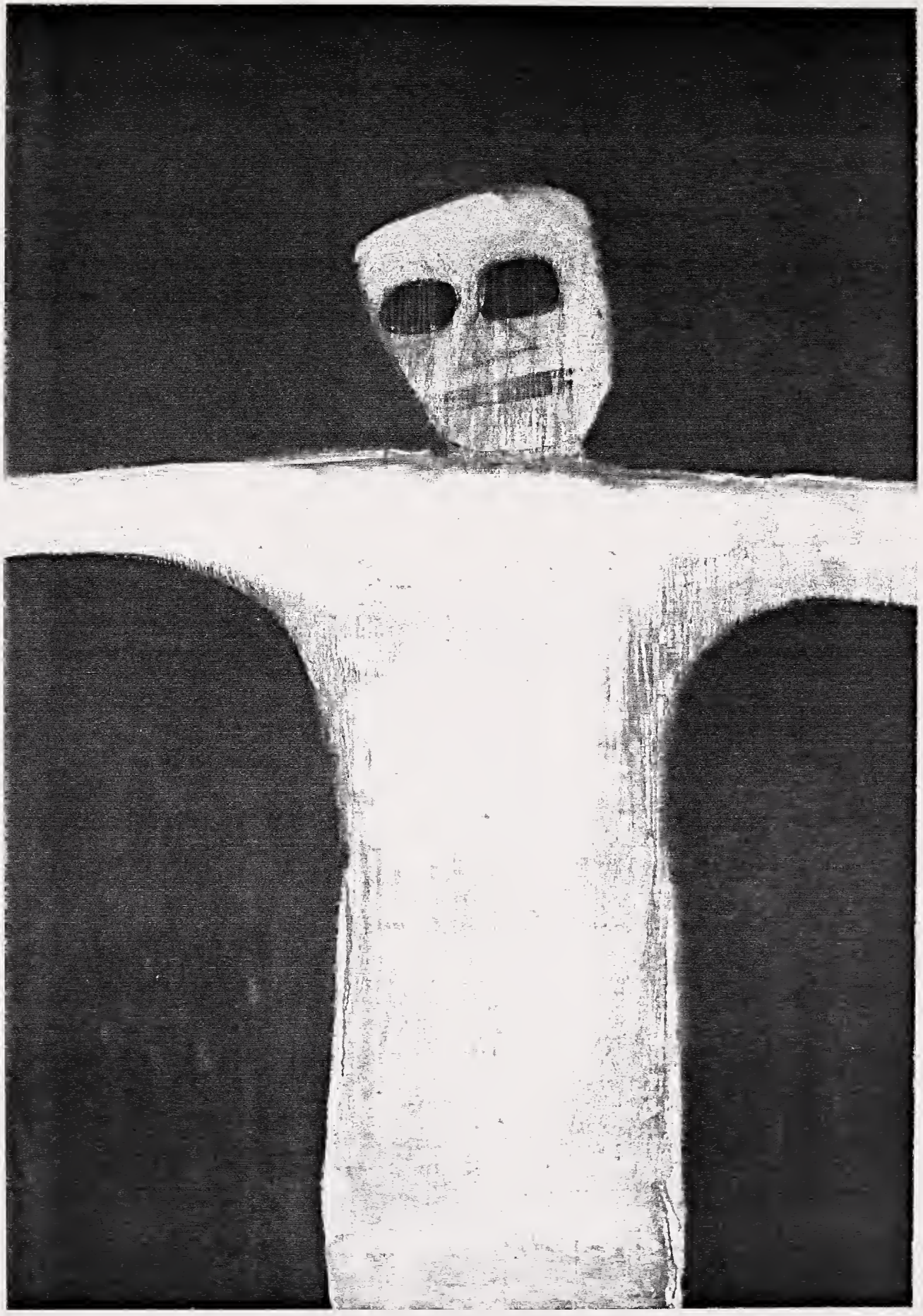
ALAS (wings)

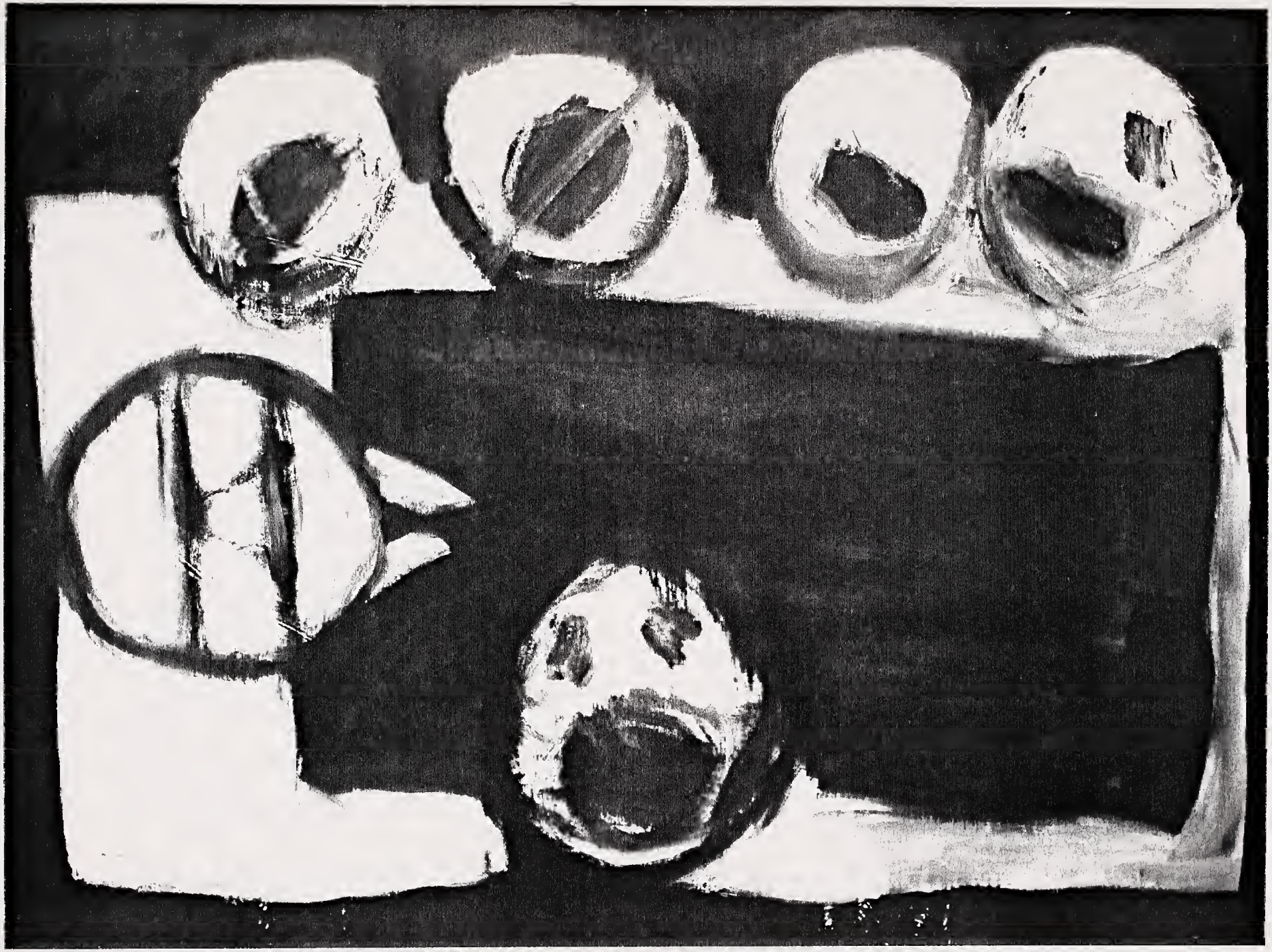
Huautla. Patches of corn. Men in straw hats. Barefoot women. Machetes. Children in rags. Ponchos. Federales with rifles slung over their shoulders. A terrifying bus ride on the side of the Sierra Mazateca mountains afraid of the bus slipping over the abyss because of the mud slides that dropped off from the partially paved road that was rutted and filled with holes and washed out sections. I was certain I was about to die when the bus slipped off the road and tumbled down the tropical mountain. That ride was a passage. A passage through the fear of death. Now a time for ritual fasting and purification in my monastic retreat. Los hongos. A magic mountain. A vision quest. And the sun. Then the rain as I lay flat out in candle light dreaming of LA REINA DE LA MUERTE. Myths of maleness. MARIA SABINA where are you? This small house in the valley of the gods. A cot made from burlap, a few chairs and my power objects. Five red and blue feathers. My wings. ALAS. A photograph of the local bruja saint the legendary hongo curandera staring at me. Confronted with either being with FIRE GOD or death. Quetzalcoatl. Shamans. The dominant emotion love. Not a contraction. Then the Transamerican Highway. The tropical heat and humidity of Managua. Poverty and graffiti. Nicaragua Libre. What is the role of the alienated artist in the Third World? The poet turned guerilla. This shanty town. A hot sticky banana republic capital turned socialist because of a popular uprising against a tyrant. The U.S.A. and United Fruit can not accept this. This shanty town shit hole and the impossible task of reconstructing this banana republic. What is to be done? The Transamerican Highway continues. EL PUEBLO DAMNIFICADO. A demonstration last night in Mexico City of a hundred thousand leftist marchers protesting the foreign debt to American banks and calling for a moratorium. The wretched of the earth. Then the metro to Coyoacan to visit the house where Frieda and Diego lived. Standing behind Trotsky's desk where he was assassinated, Russell almost cried and thought about crossing himself (a gesture of his in Mexico when entering churches) but he knew that would be improper. Only when he left the walled in house and garden compound did he realize that the proper response was to raise his clenched fist. And he did. The vision quest continues. I need the desert to continue the healing begun in Huautla and recover from Managua and Mexico City. Real Catorce. Another magical place where the spirit abides. High in the desert mountains. The sun is hot. Red ochre and burnt sienna barren landscape of cactus and rocks. Is it called CLARITY? My CLARITY tells me it is time to go. ALAS.

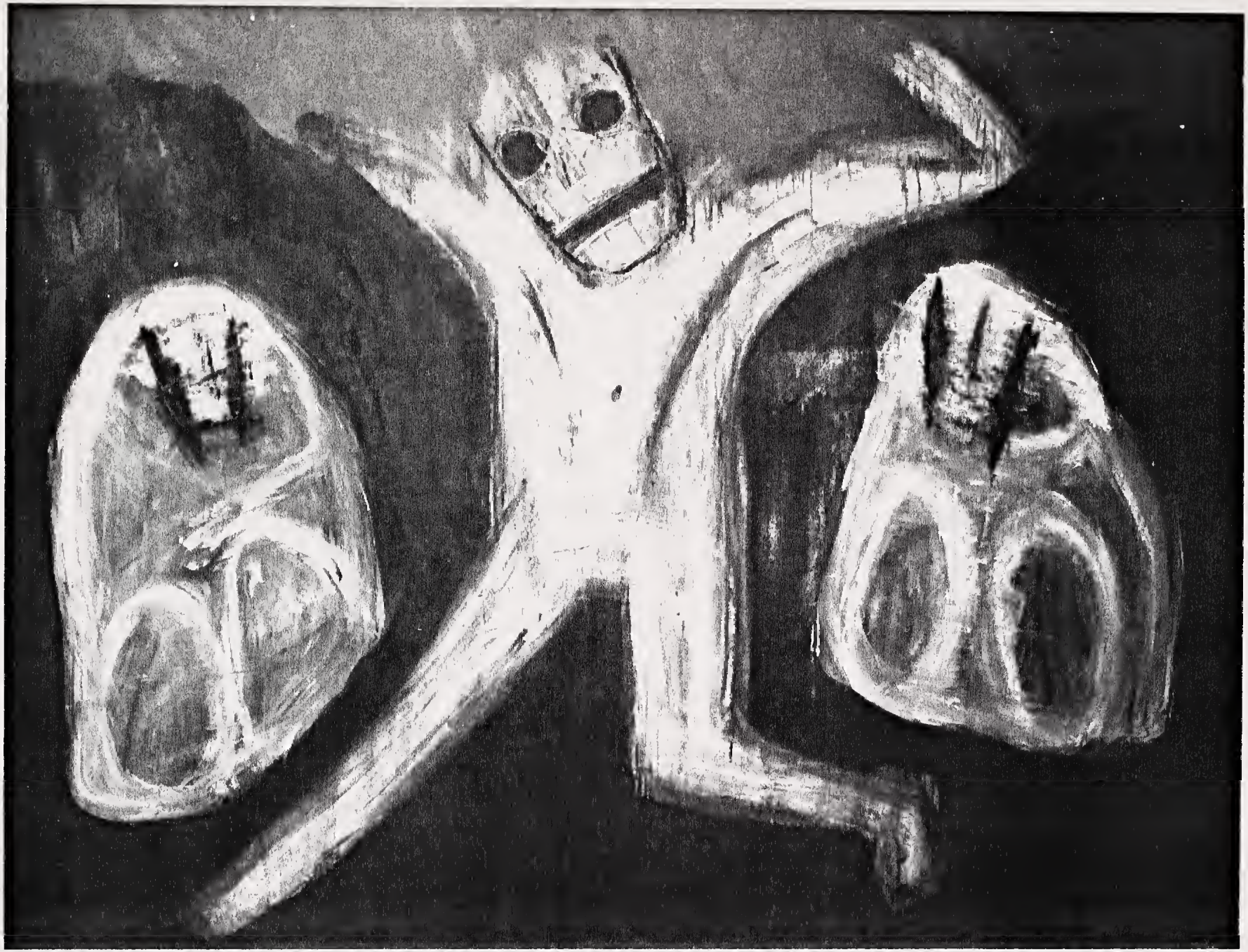
Russell Epprecht

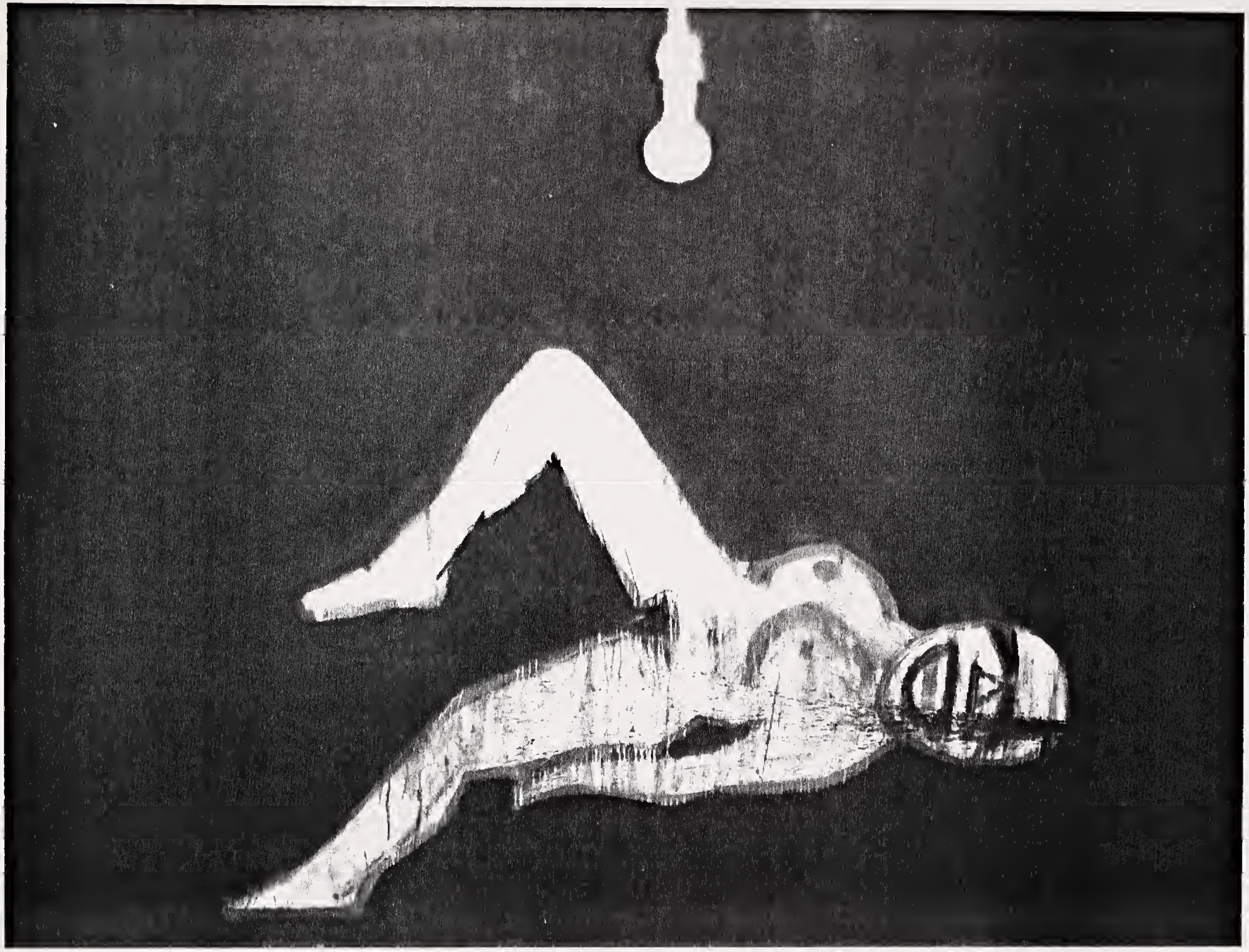


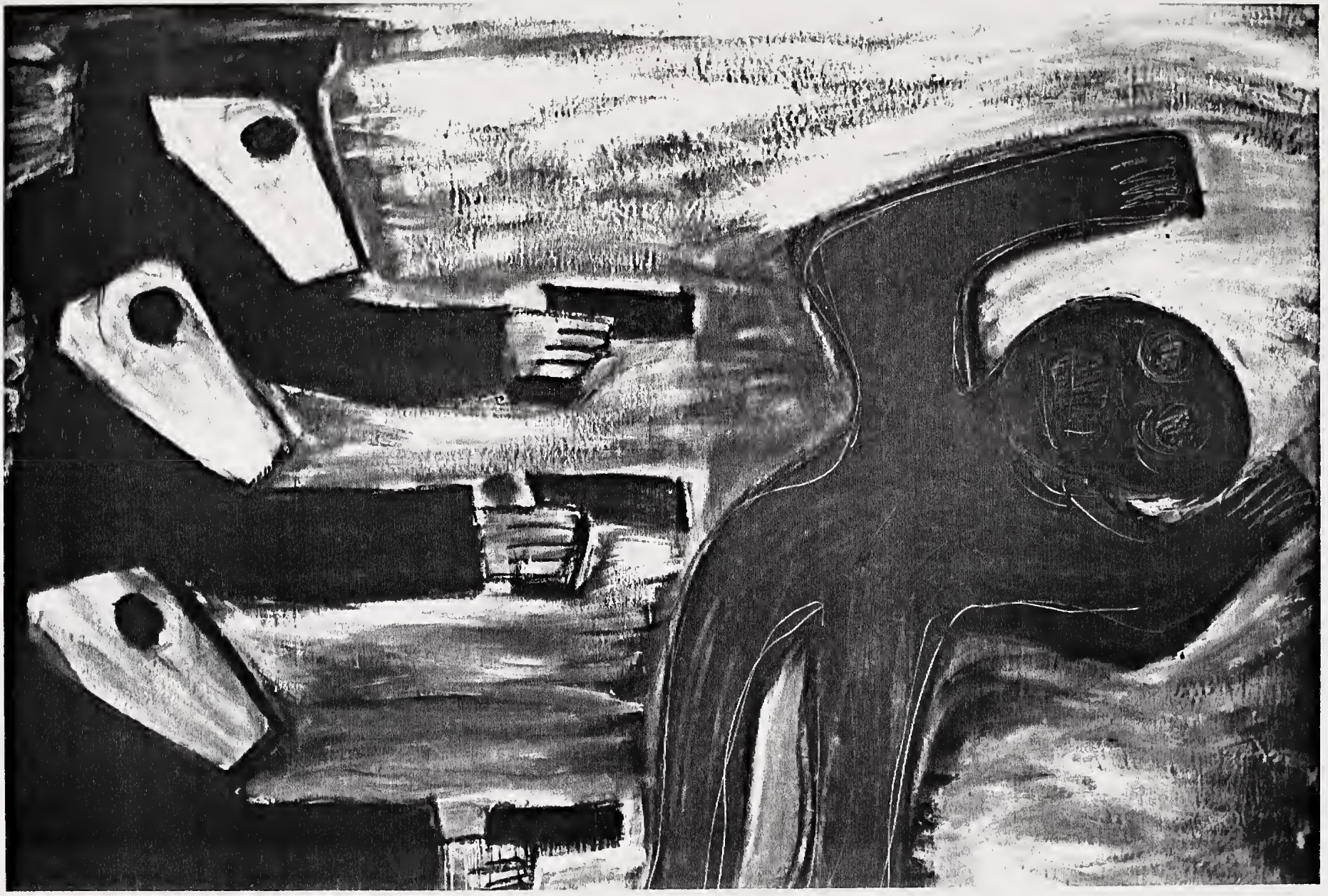












Under the soft yellow light of my end of the dark oak, I sat stooled and half stewed there at the Ear Inn. It was my occupation in the early years of SOHO to wait spider like behind my beer and bleeding journal for the next landed immigrant.

This one strutted smooth in, cruised the crowd with a strong stare, then sat smack dab in the center of my web.

I said to his eyes "How's it feel to have all the women watching you?" His cracked grin gave me permission to continue, "Your fabrics too soft and luscious to be native New York, your spirit too intact." He talked of a recent betrayal by a literary agent, a book brutally edited and then rejected, a wasted trip in from a world I was beginning to envy. Then he gently rejected my offer of a bed to stay and slipped through the screen door and out of my reach.

It was after a year or so, of fast lane art functions, that I found him again. In gallery fluorescent he was even more seductive. Our contact was fragrant and furious. A free rap of hallucinogenic rebirths, anarcho-communism, and of a malignant ménage à trois from which he was escaping.

Russell Epprecht's paintings speak first of the flat surface, the painful truth of a desert to cross first, before water. Stretched and stapled to the Storefront wall, skinned psyche salted and set in the sun. A witness to beauty inherent in cruelty. The very prison of pleasure.

His symbology, bleached of sentiment and token respect, is as primitive and pagan as the Christians of the Brazilian jungle. All color and form is to one means—to wrap us in an undeniable predicament—a confrontation with the shitty inconsistencies which haunt Epprecht's soul. To look rich in color when the color is that of Mexican mountain mud; to be deliciously provocative when the theme is crucifixion, political oppression, painful love; how they can be so fucking beautiful is a testimony of how villainous truth can get.

With the obsession of a contemporary Nazi hunter, Epprecht takes us to the tomorrow we are creating with the oversights of today. His work is simple, accessible, and good but, like water, we may prefer something more sweet and artificial.

If I were to classify Epprecht's paintings as figurative it would be essential to see them in the vein of Francis Bacon. They completely lack the luscious beauty of the classicists, or even the pristine posturing of many contemporary figurativists. His is an expressionistic kick-ass minimalism. The directness of abstraction without the tedious task of educating his viewers. His story is told to an audience that needs no canned laughter. One gets the point yet lingers to decipher what it is that makes it clearer than it's ever been before.

R.L. Seltman

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